

PARENTING THE REBELLIOUS CHILD

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A father came to the Rabbi with the complaint that his child did not treat him fairly. Thus, he asked the rabbinical authority, if the ^{5th} commandment was for the child, how is that his child did not obey it? The parent was expecting that the Rabbi ruled on his favor. However, the Rabbi wisely responded that the fifth commandment was not for the children, but for their parents, because their parents are the ones who must teach their children to honor and respect them. It is stated with clarity that the children must “honor” to the father and the mother, and the apostle Paul adds that this is the first commandment with a reward. The children who honor, respect, and are considerate with their parents are going to succeed in life and live longer than the children that do not do it.

“Honor your father and mother” — which is the first commandment with a promise — “that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.” [Deut. 5:16] (Eph. 6:2-3 NIV)”

I personally can testify how difficult is to raise a defiant child. I adopted two children. The youngest is like a pearl that I found; he is a child with special qualities, but not so the oldest, who is defiant, rebellious, and disrespectful. Parenting is not an easy task. We receive a first child, a second, a third, and who knows how these children are going to be, or what kind of character they are going to have. Do they bring their own fate? Is their future pre-determined? How is that sometimes, no matter what effort the Christian parents do to educate her, the child becomes the headache of the family? When I have counseled parents with good moral standards and education training who have come to me looking for comfort, I sometimes I have quoted and interpreted for them what the apostle Paul writes to Timothy.

“In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble. If a man cleanses

himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work (2Ti. 2:20-21).”

It is difficult to accept that one of our children has evil heart, is defiant, opposes to any rule, or despise her parents. It is more difficult to see one of our children rebelling against God, rejects salvation, and denies the power of the Holy Spirit over her life. At this point, when the believer feels desperate, because his child has rebelled to her parents’ authority and control, the apostle again intervenes with a good piece of advice that originally was given to the Ephesians and the Colossians. He says,

“Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord (Eph. 6:4)”.

“Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged (Col. 3:21).”

At this stage of development of the sciences, can we rely on them find a solution to defiant behavior of our kids? Can we Christian counselors limit our psychotherapeutic plans and strategies to the well known therapeutic systems? The psychotherapeutic individual and family theories have become so complex that create more confusion than clarification to the families that have children with behavior problems. These theories find the root of the defiant character, the reactive syndrome, or the attachment disorder in a stage in the childhood of the individual. The dynamic is this: the child has a need and cries. The mother or caretaker does not respond promptly to her needs. Then, the child does not learn to trust on the mother or caretaker. When this child becomes a youth, she is going to react against the caretakers, because she does not on trust them. The youth does not find the parents and caretakers reliable. Then, they develop a reactive character that shows rebellion against parents, society rules, and God.

It is time to go back to the simple advice that the Scriptures give us. We need to instruct our children early in their childhood, and they are going to behave properly when they are adults. To the father and mother the Book of Proverbs advises to instruct their children, and to the children the same book advises to listen to the advice of their parents. Nevertheless, the most valued advice comes from the apostle Paul who says that we have to train, correct, and discipline our children using the content of the Holy Scriptures.

“...and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (2Ti. 3:15-17).”

If we believe that this advice is only for pastors, teachers, evangelists, and elders, we are wrong. This advice is primarily for parents, those Christian men and women who are raising a family and hope to transmit a righteousness character to their future generations. We do not have to wait until our child is 13 or 14 years old to teach them the commandments, to love and respect the Holy Scriptures. We need to begin as soon as they are in the womb of the mother, and we, parents, have to be a good model for them.